

P/O Donald James Irving 420950 RAAF

Donald, known to his crew as "Shorty", was born on 1 March 1918 in Naremburn, New South Wales, Australia, the son of Oliver Thomas Irving and Florence Helena Irving (nee Tobin).

Donald enlisted in the RAAF in December 1941 and completed his pilot training before he travelled to the UK. After advanced training, in January 1944 Donald was posted to 101 Squadron at RAF Ludford Magna, Lincolnshire.

On the night of 30 March 1944, 795 aircraft were dispatched for an attack on Nuremberg. This was the last act of Bomber Harris's "Battle of Berlin", an attempt to destroy German morale by battering its cities night after night, before the bomber force turned its attentions to preparing the way for D-Day in June. A direct route, full moon and a new German weapon, the upward firing gun fitted to many fighters, would make this an incredibly challenging and dangerous mission. More than 200 night-fighters based around the Ruhr and the Rhine took to the skies this night. Twenty-six 101 Squadron Lancasters participated in the raid.

At 2150 hours on 30 March 1944 Donald and his crew departed RAF Ludford Magna, in Lancaster I LL861 (SR), tasked with ABC duties for the raid.



Strong winds had blown Donald's aircraft well off course when, at 0045 hours whilst outbound, the Lancaster was intercepted by Hptm Gustav Tham flying a Me110 of IV./NJG5 from Nord-Erfurt Airfield. Fully laden, the Lancaster exploded with great force, scattering debris over a large area near the German town of Lauterbach, about 40km NE of Frankfurt and about 200 km short of Nuremberg. All eight crew were killed, although only two could be identified. This was Donald's 9th op.

Seven 101 Squadron aircraft were lost on the raid with 47 men killed.

Also Killed: F/O Ralph Frank Litchfield RCAF (AB/SDO); WO Stanley George Richard King RAAF (Nav); F/Sgt. Norman Grenfell Huggett RAAF (WOp/AG); F/Sgt. Walter Joseph Adam RAAF (AG); F/Sgt. John Bede Newman RAAF (AG); F/Sgt. John Alfred Noske RAAF (AB); Sgt. Frank Phillips (FE)

Donald has no known grave and is commemorated on the Runnymede Memorial, Surrey

Donald is commemorated on Wall Panel 53.

Photo Source: IBCC